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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3537
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1787
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1158

UNCLAS KUALA LUMPUR 000969

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

FOR EAP/MTS, IO/HR, AND DRL/IRF

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [UNGA](#) [MY](#)
SUBJECT: MALAYSIA UNLIKELY TO CHANGE STANCE ON DEFAMATION
OF RELIGIONS VOTE

REF: STATE 122638 -- DECEMBER VOTE ON DEFAMATION OF
RELIGIONS

1. (SBU) PolCouns and Poloff met with Senior Under Secretary Rohana Ramli, a former Malaysian Ambassador to Argentina, who recently took over the MFA's Political and Security Directorate, and Principal Assistant Secretary Jamal Sharafuddin on December 3 to discuss reftel demarche. U/S Rohana admitted that she was not fully briefed on this issue, as she had only taken over this position two weeks ago. However, she believed that the GOM's stance on the upcoming "Defamation of Religions" UNGA vote was unlikely to change. Implying that the train had left the station, she said that it would be quite difficult to change Malaysia's position once a proposal had passed through the UN's Third Committee. (Note: IO's Atul Keshap met with Principal Assistant Secretary Jamal Sharafuddin in early September 2009 to discuss the Defamation of Religions issue. End Note.) She noted that it would be especially "hard to change your vote if you are a co-sponsor" (Note: Malaysia is a stalwart member of the OIC. End Note) and added that there would be "an outcry by the Malaysian public as to why we changed the vote." U/S Rohana promised to study the issue more closely as well as to pass along reftel talking points to Deputy Secretary General Zainol Abidin Omar.

2. (SBU) U/S Rohana commented that the GOM is open to working with the U.S. more closely on this and other human rights issues, and that the way forward should be to discuss the specific wording in the early phases of a proposed resolution. She explained that NAM and OIC consultations in New York were central to GOM decision making at the UN, adding that it would be difficult for Malaysia to depart from the OIC or NAM position once consensus in those organizations had been reached. She contrasted Malaysia to the U.S., saying that a "superpower" could easily stake out independent international positions, but Malaysia preferred to act as part of the OIC and/or NAM.
KEITH